

U.S. House of Representatives

December 12, 2003

THE HONORABLE DONALD H. RUMSFELD
SECRETARY
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
THE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON DC 20350-0001

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We are writing today to clarify Congress' intent with regard to funding domestic travel for soldiers returning to the U.S. on rest and recuperation (R&R) leave from Iraq or Afghanistan.

The intent of our recommendations in the FY 2004 Iraqi appropriations supplemental (P.L. 108-106) is to reimburse soldiers who qualify for R&R leave for their domestic travel. This R&R reimbursement should also include those soldiers who have already taken qualified R&R leave. The reimbursement includes air travel, bus, train, ferry, and vehicle rental expenses incurred in getting to and from the port-of-entry (Baltimore, Atlanta, Dallas, Frankfurt, or Los Angeles) to the soldier's choice of home-of-record or current military base of residence (i.e., wherever his or her spouse resides at this time). In addition, personal vehicle mileage may be paid for the distance between an airport, or a train or bus depot, and that home. If travel distance is longer than 50 miles and extends over meal times, reasonable per diem expenses should be reimbursed. If travel is overnight and requires a hotel stay, that should be reimbursed.

Given that all the forms, procedures, and staff are already in place to reimburse soldiers, we see no reason that this policy cannot be made effective immediately, and retroactive to October 1st. If the Department of Defense (DOD) wishes to create a procedure for directly buying plane tickets in the future, that is understandable.

We appreciate that the DOD may have concerns about this program due to its significant change in leave policy, but we feel that our troops should not have to bear any more burdens – financial or otherwise – than their extended service to our country already demands. It is our intention that the federal government covers all travel and transportation costs necessary to return military personnel to their homes and families. In a letter received on November 4, 2003, Bradford Loo, Acting Director for Officer and Enlisted Personnel Management wrote, "the unprogrammed additional cost to the Army would be \$16 million." Congress has provided \$55 million to assist soldiers in covering domestic travel expenses. We respectfully request that you to use those funds as we intended.

Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,



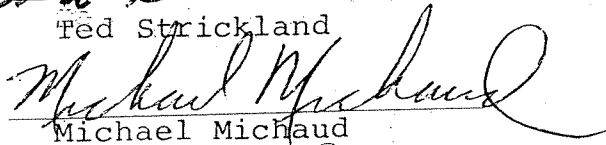
Jim Ramstad



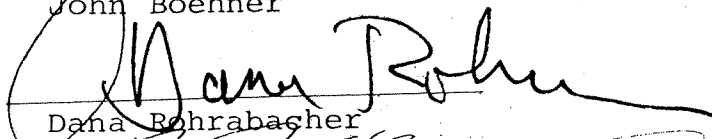
Dennis Moore

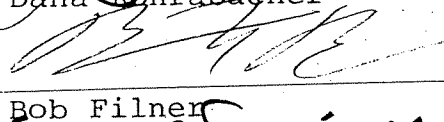

Nick Lampson

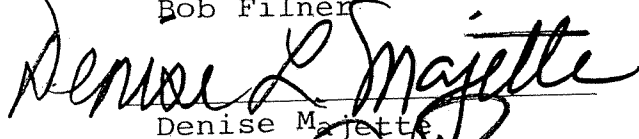

Ted Strickland

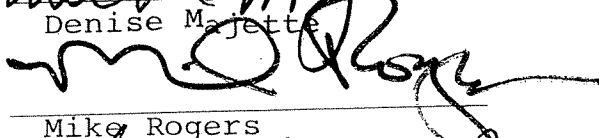

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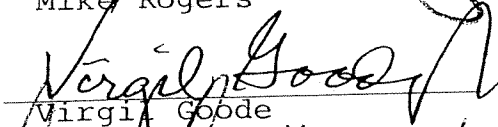

John Boehner


Dana Rohrabacher


Bob Filner

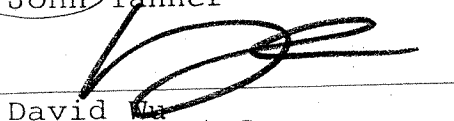

Denise Majette

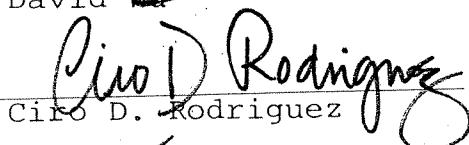

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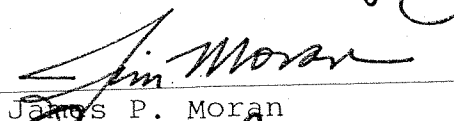

Virgil Goode

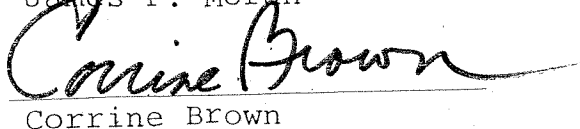

Gil Gutknecht



John Tanner

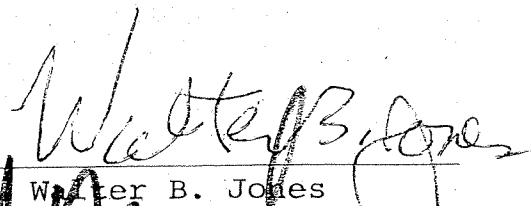

David Wu

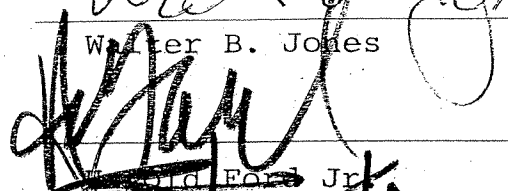

Ciro D. Rodriguez

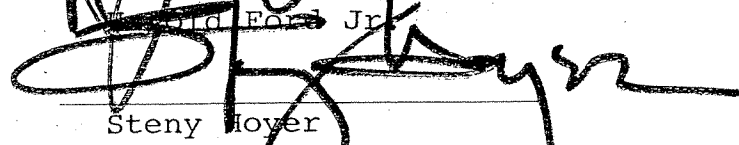

James P. Moran

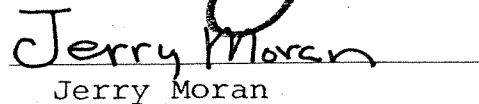

Corrine Brown


Jim Davis


Walter B. Jones


Bill Ford Jr.

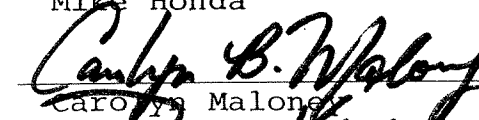

Steny Hoyer

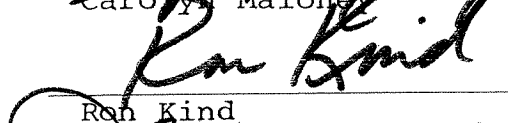

Jerry Moran

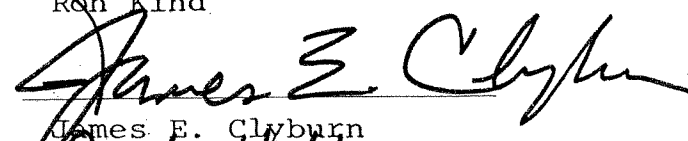

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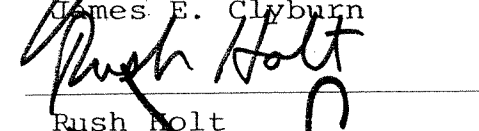

C.A. Dutch Ruppertsberger


Mike Honda


Carolyn Malone

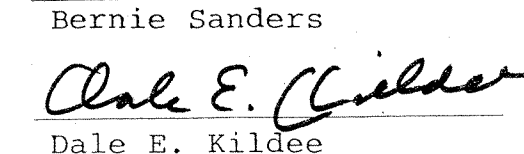

Ron Kind


James E. Clyburn


Rush Holt


Ken Lucas

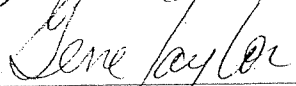

Bernie Sanders

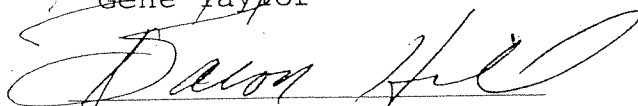

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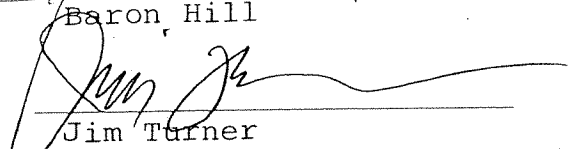

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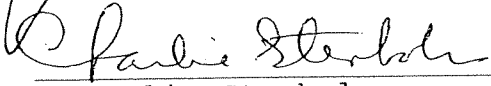

Bob Etheridge

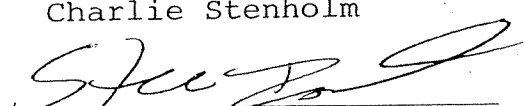

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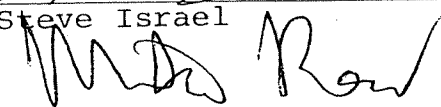

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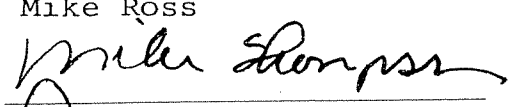

Baron Hill

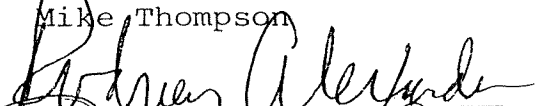

Jim Turner

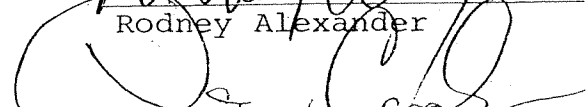

Charlie Stenholm

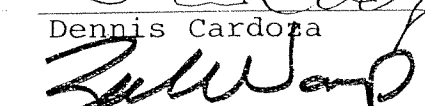

Steve Israel

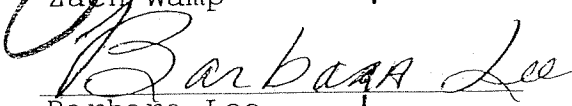

Mike Ross

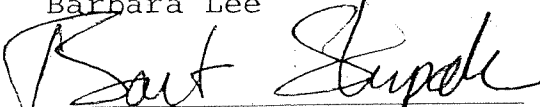

Mike Thompson

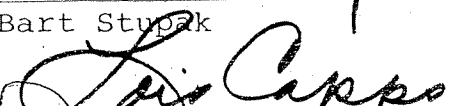

Rodney Alexander


Dennis Cardoza

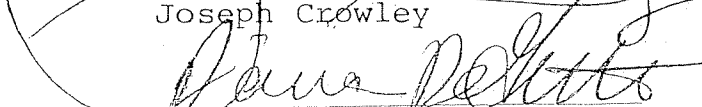

Zach Wamp

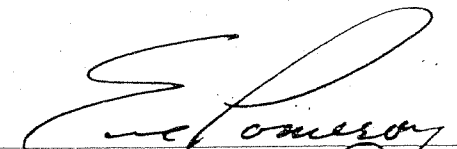

Barbara Lee

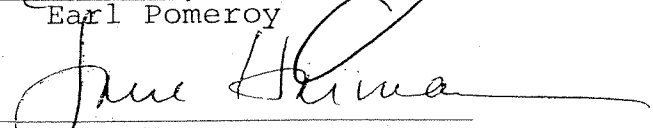

Bart Stupak

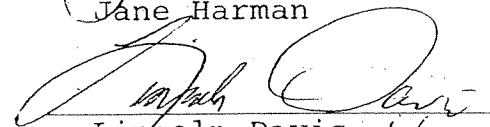

Lois Capps


Joseph Crowley

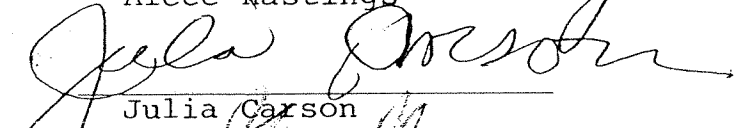

Diana DeGette



Earl Pomeroy



Jane Harman

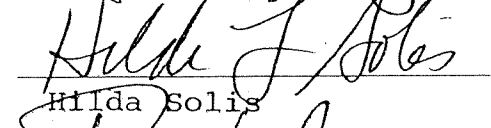

Lincoln Davis


Alcee Hastings



Julia Carson

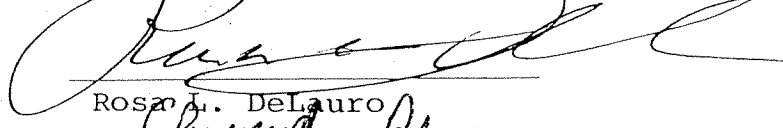

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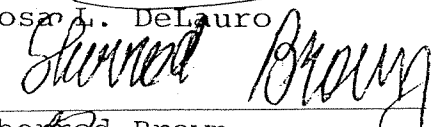

Raul M. Grijalva


Hilda Solis

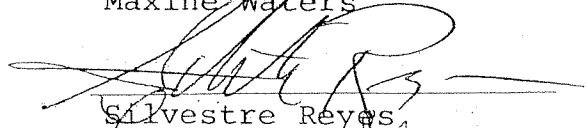

Tom Udall

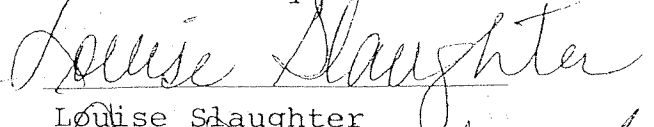

Chris Van Hollen

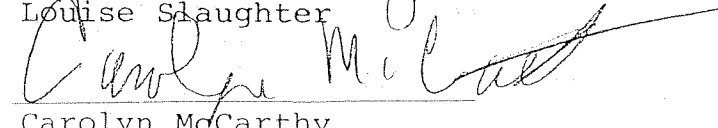

Rosa L. DeLauro

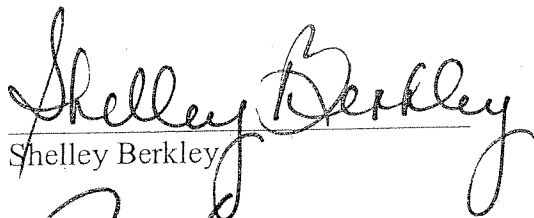

Sherrod Brown



Maxine Waters

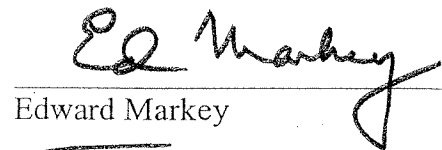

Silvestre Reyes


Louise Slaughter


Carolyn McCarthy


Shelley Berkley


Jim Cooper


Edward Markey


Tom Osborne

cc: General Richard Meyer, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff
cc: Army Chief of Staff
cc: Admiral Vernon E. Clark, Chief of Naval Operations
cc: John P. Jumper, USAF Chief of Staff
cc: General Michael W. Hagee, Marine Corps Commandant